



## **ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 5 JUNE 2018**

### **CAREONLINE SERVICE**

#### **REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES**

##### **Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the consultation with regard to the proposal to decommission the CareOnLine Service and to give an indicative position pending the finalisation of the report for the Cabinet on 6 July 2018.

##### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. In September 2017, the Cabinet approved the development of proposals to decommission the CareOnLine Service as part of a number of actions to realise the Communities and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2020.

##### **Background**

3. CareOnLine is a non-statutory service and is part of the Communities and Wellbeing Service. The service supports people across the County and there are service users in each district and borough.
4. CareOnLine provides training, ICT equipment and telephone support to enable people to use IT to increase their independence. Service users are usually people who have limiting conditions such as frailty, mental health problems, visual impairments and long term health conditions or disability. Approximately 350 people use the service each year of which 100 people are new referrals. The service costs approximately £100,000 per year and the majority of the cost is staffing resource. Following a high level review of the service in 2017, the high cost per service user meant that to continue the service in its established form was not viable given the funding pressures facing the Communities and Wellbeing Service.
5. Delivery of support is primarily through home visits to service users and a telephone support line. The number of home visits made is determined by the individual needs of the service users and can be variable. The service currently visits 48 service users with a further 35 who have received additional support from 2016. In addition, a telephone support line operates for those who may require follow-up support. In 2017/18, 234 service users contacted the telephone support line.
6. A high level options appraisal was undertaken prior to the Cabinet report dated September 2017. This explored options to:
  - Outsource the service to a different provider;
  - Transform the service model;

- Decommission the service.
7. Outsourcing the model would not achieve the savings required as it was considered unlikely that alternative voluntary groups/organisations could deliver the same service for less cost and the commissioning process itself would incur further costs.
  8. Since then, a number of voluntary organisations have been identified that also offer support to help people to use ICT equipment. Although none of them offer an identical service to the one offered by CareOnLine, in combination they do offer an alternative way for people to meet their digital support needs. Some of these services offer home visits and some provide targeted support to older and disabled people. Abilitynet, for example, provides IT support for disabled and older people at home, and also advice via telephone support.
  9. Discussions have taken place to explore options to align the service with other existing Council services. Currently there are no avenues to reshape the service in this way as to do so would require absorbing the costs associated with the service and would not achieve the required savings.
  10. It was agreed to develop detailed proposals for consultation to decommission the service and explore referral options for service users. A report detailing the results of the consultation is scheduled for the Cabinet at its meeting on 6 July 2018.

### **Proposals**

11. It is proposed to decommission the CareOnLine Service and to sign post existing users to alternative providers who offer a range of relevant services that offer suitable alternative support. It is proposed to discuss with those providers what training and support they can offer to accommodate service users who are currently using CareOnLine. A list of these providers and what they offer is detailed in Appendix A to this report.
12. If a decision is taken to decommission the service, it is proposed to stop accepting new referrals to the service and to complete the cycle of visits with existing users by the end of December 2018.

### **Consultation**

13. Consultation with service users took place between 11 April 2018-22 May 2018.
14. A questionnaire was accessible online (accessible also for service users who may wish to use screen readers), with printed copies available in standard, large print and easy read formats.
15. A phone line offering assistance with the survey was made available through the Customer Service Centre and Local Area Co-ordinators were available to visit service users on request.
16. The questionnaire outlined the proposal to decommission the CareOnLine Service, asked how service users used the service and sought information about the impact of the proposed alternative services on their support. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as Appendix B to this report.

### **Emerging feedback from the consultation**

17. At the time of writing this report, the consultation analysis is not yet complete and a full report is in the process of being prepared for the Cabinet on 6 July 2018. However, initial indicative headline feedback from the consultation is outlined in paragraph 19 below.
18. Respondents to the survey included current users of CareOnLine and also local staff. In addition, a petition containing 51 signatures and an epetition containing 61 signatures have been received, alongside some individual written responses. These petitions and individual responses will be included in the full consultation analysis.
19. An overview of the emerging feedback can be summarised as follows:
  - Most responses came from current service users;
  - Most people use the service for training, advice and technical support in IT;
  - Most responses came from people with a longstanding illness, disability or infirmity.
  - A small number of service users stated that they last used CareOnLine between one and two years ago, or longer than two years ago;
  - Most services users did not feel that alternative services would meet their needs due to the specialised nature and flexibility that the CareOnLine service offered through home visits.
  - Most service users were not aware of the alternative services available;
  - Most service users felt that having to use alternative services would make it harder for them to use technology to undertake a range of activities, such as communicating with friends/family, accessing information and living independently.

### **Resource Implications**

20. The Communities and Wellbeing Service's net budget for 2018/19 is £5.3m. In line with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy this will reduce to approximately £4.3m per annum from 2020/21. It is recognised that given the scale of these reductions, service delivery will change significantly.
21. The decommissioning of the CareOnLine Service will deliver approximately £100,000 of ongoing savings to the service's overall savings target of £1.3 million.
22. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

### **Timetable for Decisions**

23. The Cabinet will receive a report outlining the outcome of the consultation at its meeting of 6 July 2018.

### **Conclusions**

24. It is recognised that the CareOnLine Service is a valued service to a small group of service users and is operated by a group of committed and dedicated staff. However, a range of volunteer services do offer free access to support that can act as an alternative to the service that is currently operated by the Council. Most offer

free access support across all user groups including people who have limiting conditions such as frailty, mental health problems, long term conditions and disability.

25. Although these services will not exactly replicate the support that CareOnLine offers, providers such as Abilitynet offer digital/IT support for people with disabilities and have a network of volunteers who make home visits.
26. The survey makes clear that most current service users are not aware of alternatives to CareOnLine. If a decision is taken to decommission CareOnLine, then officers will work closely with the alternative providers identified and Local Area Co-ordinators to ensure that existing services users can transition to the alternative service providers.

### **Background Papers**

Report to Cabinet: 15 September 2017 – Progress with the Implementation of the Communities and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-20

<https://bit.ly/2GC2yxR>

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

27. The forthcoming report to Cabinet on 6 July 2018 will be circulated to all Members of the Council via the Members' News in Brief.

### **Officer to Contact**

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### **Appendices**

- Appendix A : Alternative Providers
- Appendix B: Questionnaire – Have your say on proposed change to the CareOnLine Service

### **Relevant Impact Assessments**

#### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

28. A full Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment is being prepared for the Cabinet report on 6 July 2018. This will explore the impact of any decision to decommission CareOnLine and will consider any mitigating actions that would need to be put in place.
29. If a decision is made to decommission the service, mitigating measures would include working closely with the alternative organisations identified and Local Area

Co-ordinators to ensure that existing services users can transition to the alternative service providers and retain the loan equipment that has been available to them.

Partnership Working and Associated Issues

30. Officers will work closely with the providers listed in Appendix A to ensure that an appropriate transition process is in place for existing service users who currently receive visits from CareOnLine staff.

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